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ABSTRACT

This annotated bibliography contains selected sources on advisory committees indexed in the ERIC system. The 11 documents and journal articles deal with various aspects of this topic, including the utilization of advisory committees for vocational and occupational education, the role of the school principal as committee leader, and how to obtain and maintain citizen involvement in advisory committees. Several of the entries examine the issue of the extent to which citizens and parents should be allowed to participate in school decision making processes through advisory committees. These 11 sources are to be regarded as representative of the material on this subject, not as a complete catalog of ERIC sources. (DS)

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The Best of ERIC

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The Best of ERIC presents annotations of ERIC literature on important topics in educational management.

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Advisory Committees

1. Carpenter, C. C. "Principal Leadership and Parent Advisory Groups." ***Phi Delta Kappan,*** 56, 6 (February 1975), pp. 426-427. EJ 110 933.

The principal is in a unique position to affect the success or failure of the local school's parent advisory group. Only through the provision of positive leadership can the principal guide the group to constructive pursuits. The first and most important function of the principal is to make sure the advisory group is aware of its limits, its responsibilities, and the possibilities open before it.

The second function is one of mediation. The principal is the communications link between the advisory group and the central administration and employees' organizations. Each must be made aware of the concerns, the legal rights, and the obligations of the others.

Finally, the principal must use his or her professional expertise to see that the advisory group does not act out of haste or emotion, but considers all sides of every issue. Only a carefully thought-out decision will stand up under criticism, and only positive results will hold the advisory group together, as well as assure the group's continued respect from the principal and the school.

2. Davies, Don. "Making Citizen Participation Work." ***National Elementary School Prinicipal,*** 55, 4 (March/April 1976), pp. 20-29. EJ 134 458.

Citizen participation in school governance, Davies writes, is rooted in the antipoverty programs and civil rights, antiwar, and consumer movements of the past decades. It is also the natural reaction to the skyrocketing costs and seldom-realized expectations of education and other human services. The public has come to question the experts and officeholders and demand more responsive institutions.

Davies critically views citizen participation in education and concludes, " The quantity is high; quality and impact are lagging far behind." School-initiated programs are too often merely "window dressing" or "placating" mechanisms. Davies responds with nine goals for more effective participation, all centering on local strategies and leadership.

The school council is for Davies a means of realizing his goals of increased democracy, decentralization, and school-community collaboration. Such councils, composed of parents, citizens, students, and teachers, "should emerge as the predominant mode" of such collaboration. Initiated with clearly defined functions and authority, the councils can engage in such activities as setting school budget priorities, identifying goals and priorities for the schools, joining in the selection and evaluation of teachers and principals, and reviewing new programs.

Davies provides some general guidelines for effective councils. Citizens and existing parent groups should participate from the start in developing a council. Council members should be elected, not appointed, and should represent a cross section of the community. And of special importance, council and principal will need to develop a "cooperative and mutually supportive relationship."

3. Eisenberger, Katherine E. "How ***Much*** Should You Involve Your Community in Picking Your Next Superintendent?" and **Erickson, Kenneth,** and **Shinn, James.** "And How Much Is ***Too*** Much Community Involvement?" ***American School Board Journal,*** 162, 11 (November 1975), pp. 33-34, 64. EJ 127 612 and 127 613.

A growing number of districts are involving the community in their superintendent selection process. Such involvement, if well-managed, can significantly improve the selection process and help guarantee a closer tie among superintendent, board, and community, Eisenberger believes. She presents a six-step plan for effective community participation in the process, which makes use of an advisory committee.

After it formulates a set of ground rules, the board can create a selection advisory committee of citizen leaders, students, administrators, and teachers. The committee can use selection criteria based on district needs and goals to evaluate the candidates and select semifinalists for further review. The board and committee can next separately interview the semifinalists, before the board chooses the finalists. The finalists can then participate in structured school-community interviews, in which citizens direct questions to the candidates through the board. Through this process, candidates can hear community concerns at firsthand and see the board in action, and the new superintendent should gain broad-based support from the start.

Erickson and Shinn add a case history to Eisenberger's model as they describe one district's use of an advisory committee to screen applicants. They focus on the procedures they employed

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as consultants to aid the citizens, who had no previous experience in reviewing professional papers. Although the committee required more time for planning, preparation, and participation, the community is happy with the results, they conclude.

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4. Greenwood, Gordon E., and others. "Citizen Advisory Committees." ***Theory into Practice,*** 16, 1 (February 1977), pp. 12-16. EJ number not yet assigned.

Parent involvement in the schools has traditionally been limited to middle-class parents and to activities outside the decision-making process. But beginning in the sixties, parents—particularly those with low incomes—have joined in decision-making, as federal law has mandated advisory committees for new federal programs. Some states are now also mandating school advisory committees.

The authors, drawing on their work with advisory committees in Florida, critically examine all aspects of such committees, including committee functions, operation, and evaluation. Their examination brings many valuable suggestions for practitioners.

Schools may have difficulty, they state, in recruiting low-income and minority parents for their committees, because of distrust built up over the years and child care and transportation problems. A special membership committee can help seek out these needed parents. The committee can operate by dividing the school's attendance area into sections and identifying social leaders for each. These leaders can recommend prospective members, whom the committee should personally invite to join, perhaps by home visit. Parent volunteers can help solve the new members' child care and transportation problems.

The authors also suggest use of a "parent involvement specialist" to help solve the attitude problems of both administrators, who may feel threatened, and parents, who may feel unqualified. The specialist, perhaps a regular staff member released part time, could conduct inservice training for administrators and parents and ease communication problems as necessary.

5. Haugen, Percy; Dillman, Gene; and **Brown, Lee.** "School/Community Involvement at the Secondary Level." ***Thrust for Educational Leadership,*** 6, 3 (January 1977), pp. 14-16. EJ number not yet assigned.

This article reports on the community participation effort of the Fairfield-Suisun Unified School District, California. Though short on critical discussion, it illustrates some effective uses of advisory committees, highlighting their roles in program development and improvement.

The district's new competency-based education program owes much to citizen involvement. A joint committee of citizens and staff helped develop its new curriculum. Newly constituted public service and industry-education advisory councils, respectively composed of government and business representatives, guide the district's new career majors. Vocational, agricultural, and home economics councils also help direct programs and promote off-campus activities. The district expects that this involvement will improve its course offerings and thus increase the employability of its graduates.

Advisory councils, composed of parents, students, and teachers, operate at each school and discuss such topics as personalized learning, school organization, and community-based learning. The councils divide into subcommittees to study and advise on specific program concerns.

Other district efforts at community involvement include a scholarship council, surveys of parent concerns, a plan to promote teacher-parent contact, and a series of call-in parent meetings, in which the schools invite small groups of parents for discussion of policies and programs.

Six other articles in this issue of ***Thrust*** discuss community involvement.

6. Hofstrand, Richard K., and **Phipps, Lloyd J.** ***Advisory Councils for Education: A Handbook.*** Urbana: Department of Vocational and Technical Education, University of Illinois, 1971. 49 pages. ED 057 213.

Administrators planning to organize a citizens committee or looking for answers to questions about such groups should put this handbook on their reading list. Five chapters of detailed, straightforward information discuss benefits, organization, development, and functions of advisory groups.

Administrators and boards of education are realizing the benefits of citizens committees—advice and assistance and better use of time and resources. Learners, council members, parents, schools, and the community also gain. Every community evaluates its schools: the conclusions and judgments of an advisory council collecting and disseminating appropriate information can crystallize support for the schools and offset vague and unrealistic criticism.

Regardless of the size of the district, the authors suggest a central council of 9-12 people, supplemented by other committees of 5-9 members. A desirable objective is to involve 1 percent of the voters in committees that are school sponsored rather than independent, both temporary and continuing, and advisory not administrative. The selection process receives detailed treatment.

In developing council operations, two concerns are important: internal workings such as bylaws, responsibilities, and

policies; and the process of how members can become informed and can learn about problems to be studied.

Advisory councils should avoid such questionable activities as independent reports to the public, noneducational concerns, pressure tactics, fund-raising, involvement in personnel matters, and the "hows" of learning, teaching, counseling, or administration.

7. Illinois State Office of Education. ***A Guide for Planning, Organizing, and Utilizing Advisory Councils.*** Springfield, Illinois: Division of Vocational and Technical Education, [1975]. 40 pages. ED 117 338.

"Occupational education programs must have direct lines of communication with the professions, business, industry, and public services if they are to be relevant and up to date. . . . The involvement of volunteer, knowledgeable citizens enhances important public acceptance for career education." But how is a career education advisory council developed?

Different levels of education and different sizes of school require or permit varying council systems, with varying degrees of specialization. Whatever the size or scope of the council system, though, there are common requirements for organization.

The council system should be officially sanctioned and provided with adequate guidelines by the school administration. Appointment of a selection committee will provide a valuable method of assuring a wide range of viewpoints on the council. The choice of council members is crucial. The selection committee should be aware that specialists may be more valuable than generalists in an advisory capacity for many occupational areas.

"The average advisory council should be large enough to be representative of the community and small enough to encourage active individual participation." Three-year terms on a rotating basis will provide adequate time for developing interest and knowledge, as well as assuring continuity of council activities. School representatives should be present, but without a vote.

Once organized, a council must be kept busy and must feel that its work is valuable and effective. Its actions can help teachers and administrators in numerous ways, improve student career selection, placement, and evaluation methods and results, provide career information, improve community-parent involvement, and develop better public relations for the program.

More a listing of suggestions and possibilities than a theoretical document, this collection of three bulletins provides information valuable in the formation of advisory councils in general, despite its announced focus on occupational education.

8. Jenkins, Jeanne Kohl. "Impression Management: Responses of Public School Principals to School-Community Advisory Councils." Paper presented at American Educational Research Association annual meeting, Chicago, April 1974. 37 pages. ED 090 665.

Principals use varying manipulative strategies, both consciously and unconsciously, to influence the perceptions advisory councils develop about the principal and his or her authority, and the perceptions the principals develop about themselves and their involvement with the councils. These strategies make up "impression management"—how an individual manufactures impressions of himself for the benefit of other people with whom he interacts.

Using references to other studies and authorities, this

study concentrates on methods used by principals in the Los Angeles public schools to deal with new, introduced advisory councils. Principals tend to see their role as that of legitimate decision-maker in the school, yet realize that council members may challenge that role, creating a potential conflict.

While more scholarly than most of the documents covered in this selection, Jenkins's paper can be particularly valuable in pointing out to administrators the possible reasons for and effects of their styles of leadership. The study concludes that principals whose communities and councils fail to be supportive or are even antagonistic appear more likely to use "impression management" techniques, a tendency that could further obscure the root problems hindering good relationships.

9. Nerden, Joseph T. "Advisory Committees in Vocational Education: A Powerful Incentive to Program Improvement," and **Whitten, Benjamin,** and others. "The Effective Functioning of Local Advisory Committees: Case Studies from Baltimore." ***American Vocational Journal,*** 52, 1 (January 1977), pp. 27-35. EJ 153 190 and 153 191.

Vocational educators at all levels view advisory committees as essential to their programs, but they do not always use such committees effectively, Nerden writes. To aid educators in making better use of these committees, Nerden discusses their functions and offers some sound recommendations for local administrators.

Vocational advisory committees can be particularly helpful in updating programs so that they reflect current technology and employment opportunities. Employer, management, and labor representatives, experts in their fields, can offer very specific advice. Their participation, if it does not exceed advice, can be especially beneficial to vocational teachers, who are often inclined to dwell on the broad essentials.

Some basic rules will improve committee effectiveness, Nerden states. One of the committee members, rather than a school official, should chair the commmittee. The school should handle all the necessary legwork, such as assembling and mimeographing materials and arranging for secretarial help. Meetings should be spent on vital issues and problems at hand and not on reviewing old business and past accomplishments. Schools should also send out meeting agendas in advance. And though schools should clearly distinguish advisory from policy-making activities, they should never use a committee as a "rubber stamp."

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Whitten's article complements Nerden's by presenting six case studies of advisory committees serving the Baltimore City Schools. Five studies discuss the work of trade committees linked to specific occupational programs, and one discusses the effort of a short-term committee in developing a new career education course. The studies detail the committees' significant contributions to the creation and upgrading of district programs.

10. Nolte, M. Chester. "Citizen Power over Schools: How Much Is Too Much?" ***American School Board Journal,*** 163, 4 (April 1976), pp. 34-36. EJ 134 527.

While the involvement of citizens groups in education has brought many benefits, it can also bring serious problems, Nolte warns. Boards must be careful to maintain their authority and perogatives through "meticulous organizing of citizen advisory committees."

Two problem areas of citizen involvement call for special attention. Boards should not officially seat citizens groups at the collective bargaining table, since such involvement "only confuses issues and builds a forum for divisiveness." Boards should also be wary of using citizens groups in textbook selection. Citizens can focus their attention on miniscule particulars rather than general goals and end up being a censorship group.

Nolte concludes with general guidelines for the management of advisory committees. Boards should select a committee that represents a true cross section of the district and appoint members themselves. Districts should define a specific task and purpose for a committee and disband it once it has fulfilled its charge. The advisory-only status of the committee should be made clear. Boards will also need to give the committee full cooperation, providing access to all needed information, and "keep an open mind until all the facts are in."

11. Oldham, Neild B. ***Citizens Advisory Committees: Public Participation Increases; Guides Change in American Education.*** Arlington, Virginia: National School Public Relations Association, 1973. 56 pages. ED 091 853.

The citizens advisory committee movement has taken off in unexpected directions. Originally intended as a group serving the entire district and its board of education as a consultative body, the citizens committee is now appearing frequently at the local school level as an operational unit.

This is the most surprising result of a survey conducted by ***Education U.S.A.*** into current national practices for handling advisory committees. This booklet analyzes survey responses to present a picture of the average committee, how it is organized, what it does, how it is changing, and what its strengths and weaknesses are as perceived by its members. Countless specific committees are cited as examples of both typical and unique solutions to common concerns and needs.

Coverage of the basic issues is thorough and clear in this most valuable of the items in this listing. A substantial appendix provides samples of bylaws, policies, and forms.

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